

Message Text

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ACTION M-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 A-01 SCA-01 SS-20 INR-10 EB-11

CU-05 MMS-04 ABF-01 PER-05 SP-03 DRC-01 RSC-01 /082 W

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R 032001Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0872

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FOR DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY BROWN AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY KUBISCH
FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN, CGEN, DR

SUBJECT: PROPOSAL TO RE-OPEN CONSULATE AT SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS

REF : SD 2713

1. THE DEPT. WILL RECALL THAT THE CONSULATE AT SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS WAS CLOSED FOR BUDGETARY REASONS IN 1969. SINCE THEN, THE LEADERS OF SANTIAGO HAVE PERSISTENTLY SOUGHT TO HAVE THE CONSULATE RE-INSTATED BOTH FOR REASONS OF CONVENIENCE (RATHER THAN TRAVEL TWO HOURS TO SANTO DOMINGO) AND OF PRESTIGE (THE RIVALRY BETWEEN THE SECOND CITY AND THE CAPITAL IS ON OCCASION SOMETHING TO BEHOLD). THESE TWO REASONS ARE OF ONLY MINIMUM INTEREST TO US AND WE CAN OF COURSE EASILY SURVIVE THE DIS-APPOINTMENT OF THE GOOD PEOPLE OF SANTIAGO OVER THE LOSS OF THE CONSULATE. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, EXISTING AND INCREASING US INTERESTS TO BE SERVED BY RE-OPENING THE CONSULATE.

2. BASIC DATA. THE 160,000 PEOPLE OF THE DOMREP'S SECOND CITY, LOCATED IN THE NORTH CENTER OF THE DOMREP, COMPRISE THE MAIN POPULATION CENTER OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST FERTILE VALLEY-- THE HEART OF THE NATION'S TOBACCO, CACAO AND PRODUCE AREA AS WELL AS THE RUM INDUSTRY. SOME 2,000 US CITIZENS LIVE IN SANTIAGO OR IN THE SURROUNDING AREA. THE GODR HAS ALLOCATED

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CONSIDERABLE FUNDS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH COAST AS A

TOURIST AREA. THE RUNWAY OF A NEW MAJOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING THE LARGEST JETS IS NEW ABOUT COMPLETED ON THE NORTH COAST. THE WORLD BANK HAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO LEND THE GODR BEFORE YEAR'S END SUFFICIENT FUNDS TO COMPLETE THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR NORTH COAST TOURIST DEVELOPMENT. THE GODR IS DREDGING THE NORTH COAST PORT OF PUERTO PLATO TO ENABLE IT TO HANDLE THE LARGER CARIBBEAN CRUISE SHIPS. AS A CONSEQUENCE, A NUMBER OF US AND OTHER HOTEL COMPANIES ARE ACTIVELY LOOKING OVER NORTH COAST INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES. ALL OF THIS AUGURS FOR A SIGNIFICANT INFLUX OF US TOURISTS (CURRENTLY OF SOME TWO MILLION TOURISTS WHO VISIT THE CARIBBEAN ANNUALLY LESS THAN TWO PERCENT COME TO THE DOMREP).

3. CONSULAR INTEREST. WE ESTIMATE THAT ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF PASSPORT, CITIZENSHIP, SPECIAL CONSULAR SERVICES AND NON-IMMIGRANT VISA WORK HERE IN SANTO DOMINGO IS GENERATED BY RESIDENTS OF SANTIAGO AND ITS ENVIRONS. THE EXPECTED INCREASE IN NORTH COAST TOURISM WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE USUAL GAMUT OF CONSULAR PROBLEMS WHICH WE SIMPLY CANNOT HANDLE FROM SANTO DOMINGO (IT IS A THREE HOUR DRIVE TO THE NORTH COAST).

4. COMMERCIAL INTEREST. SANTIAGO COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE STIMULATED BY THE PROJECTED TOURIST INCREASE WITH CONCOMITANT US EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES. SEVERAL US COMPANIES ARE NOW ESTABLISHED IN THE AREA AND THE NEWLY-OPENED, ECEELLENT INDUSTRIAL PARK HAS ATTRACTED OTHERS AND WILL ATTRACT MORE. THE TRADE AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE ALREADY SUCH THAT I HAVE SCHEDULED THE COMMERCIAL ATTACHE TWICE A MONTH TO SANTIAGO AND HAVE INSTALLED A COMMERCIAL LIBRARY IN THE BINATIONAL CENTER THERE. A PERMANENT US INSTALLATION WOULD ELIMINATE THE TRAVEL AND ASSIST US IN EXPLOITING ALL COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES.

5. CULTURAL INTEREST. PLEASE SEE REFTTEL.

6. PROPOSAL. I BELIEVE THAT THE FOREGOING DESCRIPTION OF US INTERESTS IN THE SANTIAGO AREA MAKES A POSITIVE (AND HOPEFULLY PERSUASIVE) CASE FOR REOPENING THE CONSULATE THERE. FAILURE TO ACT COULD RESULT IN SOME MESSY PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CONSULAR CASES IN THE NORTH COAST TOURIST AREA DUE TO OUR INABILITY TO MOVE WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISPATCH IN RESPONSE TO PROBLEMS. RECOGNIZING THAT THERE ARE MANY MERITORIOUS ACTIONS THE DEPT. COULD TAKE WERE FUNDS AND PERSONNEL AVAILABLE, I WOULD MAKE THE FOLLOWING PROPOSAL: (1) THAT WE RE-OPEN THE CONSULATE AT SANTIAGO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OFFERING FULL CONSULAR SERVICES EXCEPT THAT OF IMMIGRATION VISAS WHICH THE EMBASSY'S CONSULAR SECTION WOULD CONTINUE TO HANDLE NATION-WIDE (SUCH WAS THE ARRANGEMENT WHEN THE CONSULATE AT SANTIAGO WAS PREVIOUSLY EXTANT); (2) THAT THE CONSULATE BE STAFFED BY TWO

FSO'S, ONE MIDDLE GRADE AND ONE JUNIOR, ONE AMERICAN SECRETARY AND THREE LOCALS; (3) THAT ONE FSO POSITION COME FROM THE EMBASSY'S CONSULAR SECTION AND THAT THE OTHER COME FROM THE POLITICAL SECTION (I HAVE PREVIOUSLY RECORDED MY VIEW THAT THREE POLITICAL OFFICERS ARE NOT REQUIRED HERE AND WITH THE DEPARTURE OF THE JUNIOR POLITICAL OFFICER NEXT MONTH, THE TIMING TO REPLACE HIM BY A JUNIOR CONSULAR OFFICER EVENTUALLY FOR SANTIAGO MAY BE FEASIBLE). UNDER THIS PROPOSAL, THEREFORE, I AM ONLY REQUESTING ONE AMERICAN SECRETARY AND AUTHORITY TO HIRE THREE LOCALS AS FAR AS NEW PERSONNEL IS CONCERNED. WITH RESPECT TO OTHER EXPENSES, I HAVE PRIVATELY AND VERY TENTATIVELY EXPLORED THE POSSIBILITY OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONSULATE WITH J. ARMANDO BERMUDEZ, MILLIONAIRE RUM PRODUCER AND THE MOST PERSISTENT ADVOCATE OF "RECAPTURING" THE CONSULATE. HE HAS ASSURED ME THAT THE COMMUNITY AT SANTIAGO WOULD BE WILLING TO ACQUIRE OR BUILD A SUITABLE CONSULAR BUILDING AND MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO THE USG WITHOUT COST (RENT AND UTILITIES) OR FOR THE PROVERBIAL ONE DOLLAR A YEAR OR WHATEVER WE DESIRED. BERMUDEZ IS A SERIOUS AND RESPONSIBLE MAN WHO CAN BE RELIED UPON. IF THE SANTIAGO COMMUNITY'S OFFER TO ASSIST CAN APPROPRIATELY BE ACCEPTED, WE WOULD ESTIMATE THE ANNUAL EXPENSE TO THE USG FOR THE CONSULATE AS FOLLOWS: (A) THREE LOCAL SALARIES \$17,800; (B) ALLOWANCES AMERICAN SECRETARY S-5 \$4,500; (C) CLEANING AND GURD SERVICES \$5,000 AND (D) OFFICE SUPPLIES AND MISCELLANEOUS \$1,000 FOR A TOTAL \$28,300 PLUS THE SALARY OF THE AMERICAN SECRETARY. IN ADDITION, WE ESTIMATE A ONE-TIME EXPENSE FOR OFFICE AND HOUSE FURNISHINGS OF \$22,000. IN SUM, FOR ABOUT \$50,000 INITIALLY AND \$28,300 THEREAFTER ANNUALLY (PLUS AMERICAN SECRETARY'S SALARY) WE COULD RE-OPEN THE CONSULATE AT SANTIAGO AND PRE-SERVE AND PROMOTE US INTERESTS IN THE DOMREP SUBSTANTIALLY MORE EFFECTIVELY THAN WE CAN NOW. IF RENT AND UTILITIES HAD TO BE PAID, WE ESTIMATE THAT \$18,000 MORE WOULD BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REQUIRED ANNUALLY.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: (1) THAT THE DEPT. DETERMINE THAT IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO RE-OPEN THE CONSULATE AT SANTIAGO; (2) THAT THE DEPT. ASCERTAIN WHETHER THE RATHER SMALL SUMS INVOLVED CAN BE SQUEEZED OUT OF THE FY75 BUDGET OR IF NOT, THAT THEY DEFINITELY BE INCLUDED IN THE FY76 BUDGET; (3) THAT THE DEPT. INFORM US REGARDING THE EXTENT TO WHICH LOCAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (FREE RENT AND UTILITIES) CAN BE ACCEPTED APPROPRIATELY.
HURWITCH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: blochd0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SANTO02714
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740177-0895
From: SANTO DOMINGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740777/aaaacnru.tel
Line Count: 165
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION M
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SD 2713
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: blochd0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JUN 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 SEP 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <14 FEB 2003 by shawdg>; WITHDRAWN <13 Jun 2005 by BoyleJA, PRIVACY>; RELEASED <16 JUN 2005 by powellba2>; APPROVED <20 JUN 2005 by blochd0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROPOSAL TO RE-OPEN CONSULATE AT SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS
TAGS: OGEN, CGEN, DR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005